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Diversity makes business sense

Cultural diversity is both a moral and a commercial issue. There may not be huge surprise at the principal finding in the following pages: that publishing remains largely a white, middle-class industry. It is a syndrome that causes a certain amount of white, middle-class guilt; but, as the articles in this supplement also reveal, self-avowed liberals often do more to perpetuate the *status quo* than they would care to recognise. What offers more promise is evidence of a growing awareness that publishing will have to adapt in order to reach changing audiences.

decibel is a one-year initiative of Arts Council England, promoting cultural diversity in the Arts. This project has the long-term aim of changing the arts landscape forever, moving the arts towards a place where it is more representative of the society we live in. It has invested more than £5m in artists, development, events, debate and profiling activity.

In December and January, *The Bookseller* teamed up with decibel to distribute a survey, available in copies of the publication and online, into ethnicity in publishing. More than 500 people responded. What the survey shows is that the publishing workforce is unrepresentative of minority ethnic communities, a fact not lost on the industry itself, as Tom Holman reports on page four. The overwhelming majority did not regard their company as culturally diverse. The

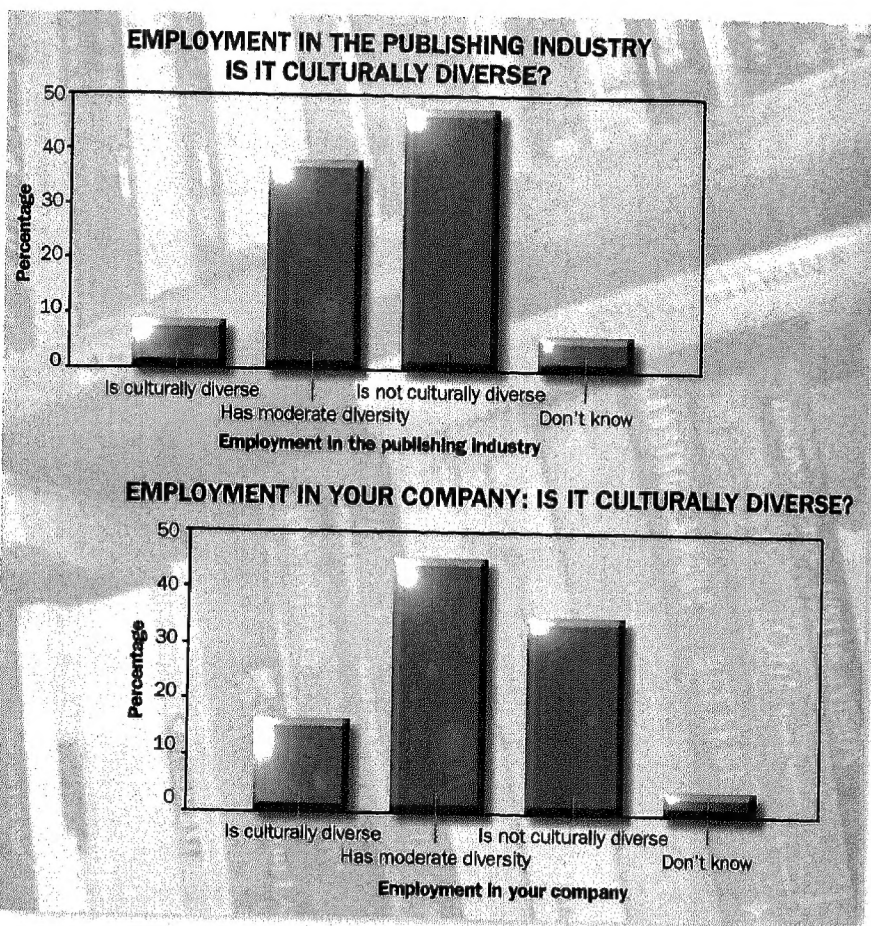
impact of this lack of diversity on the industry and those from minority ethnic communities who work within it makes uncomfortable reading.

As Danuta Kean reveals, Black and Asian employees report feelings of isolation and frustration at the lack of minority ethnic role models in senior management (*Time for change*, pages eight to 11). Furthermore, many Black and Asian novelists feel pressured by white publishers to write about multicultural issues, which effectively ghettoises them (see *Are you simpatico?* page 13).

The moral arguments for cultural diversity are backed by strong economic incentives. The advertising industry estimates that Black and Asian communities have an annual disposable income of £32bn. The brown pound, as it has been termed, is clearly a force in the market. Savvy companies are aware of the opportunities that only a truly diverse workforce can spot. As Hilary Macaskill reports on page 7, diverse companies are healthier companies. The book industry is much engaged at present with the project of "expanding the market" beyond its static audience; within these pages are suggestions of how and why publishing must develop to meet that challenge.

Nicholas Clee: Editor of THE BOOKSELLER

Publishing is overwhelmingly white and middle class, but it wants to change. Tom Holman reveals the results of the decibel/Bookseller survey into cultural diversity in the industry



Room for improvement

Ethnicity in the UK

HOW PUBLISHING COMPARES

How does cultural diversity in publishing compare to the population as a whole? Census data collated by the Office of National Statistics in 2001 put the number of UK minority ethnic residents at 4.6 million people, or 7.9% of the total population of 58.8 million people. Of those who defined themselves as minority ethnic, about half described themselves as Asian or Asian British, and a quarter as Black or Black British. The number of people from ethnic groups other than white had risen by 53% over the past 10 years.

Two factors explain why employment in publishing is less culturally diverse than the decibel survey at face value suggests and less diverse than the population as a whole. Firstly, minority ethnic groups are more likely to respond to a survey about cultural diversity than white workers, thereby distorting the proportions. This would mean that the figure of 13% is an over-generous estimate of the level of diversity in the industry.

Secondly, the census data shows that the proportion of minority ethnic workers in publishing is far greater in London, where the vast majority of UK publishers are based. Nearly half of the country's minority ethnic communities are based in the capital, where they account for 29% of the total number of residents. But of the respondents to the decibel survey who work in Greater London, only 14% were from minority ethnic communities. If the workforce of London publishers was representative of the population of the capital, the number of Black and Asian publishers would more than double.

What is already widely suspected about publishing has proven true: the industry remains an overwhelmingly white profession. That is the clear conclusion of *The Bookseller* and decibel survey into cultural diversity, the first undertaken across the whole industry.

It is also the conclusion of the majority of respondents to the survey. In response to key questions about levels of cultural diversity in businesses, respondents feel there is scant evidence that it exists. Only 8% believe the industry to be culturally diverse, while close to half, 47%, say it is not. About a third think there is moderate diversity.

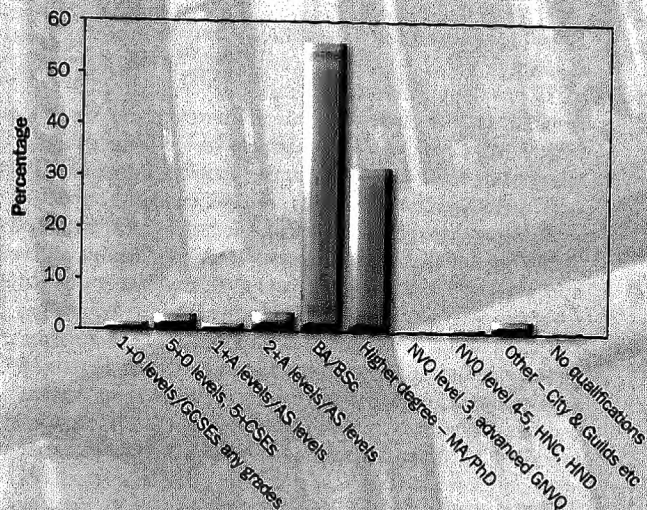
Publishing is, it seems, aware of the stark uniformity of its workforce. Many respondents feel levels of diversity to be slightly higher within their own company than in the trade as a whole, but only 16% agree that their company is culturally diverse. A significant number, 35%, feel their company is not culturally diverse.

Of the 523 respondents to the survey 87%, or 456, are white. Asian, Black, Chinese and other ethnic groups combine to make up the remaining 13%. This proportion of minority ethnic employees may seem more than representative of the UK population as a whole.

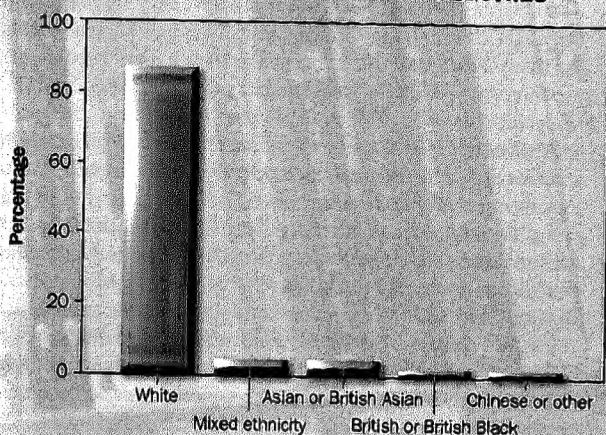
But given that the majority of respondents—77%—are based in London, where minority ethnic communities make up almost 30% of the total population, there is nothing for the industry to feel complacent about (see box: Ethnicity in the UK: how publishing compares).



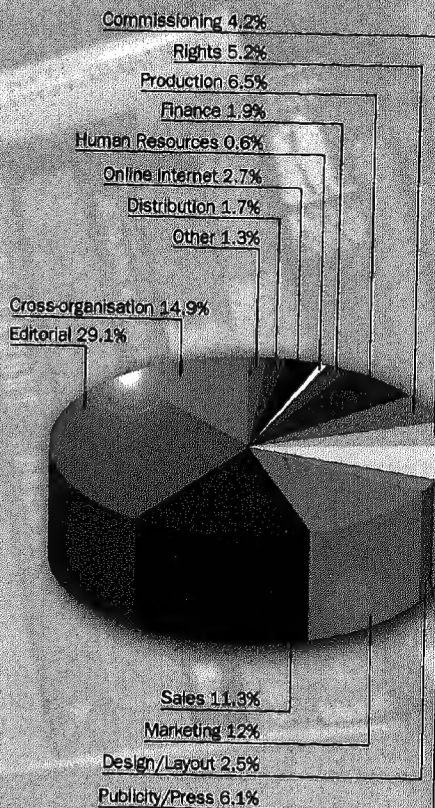
WHICH QUALIFICATIONS DO YOU HOLD?



BROAD ETHNIC GROUP CATEGORIES



WHICH DEPARTMENT DO YOU WORK IN?



“ The data suggests that new entrants to the industry are being drawn from a wider range of communities ”

a missed opportunity

INSIDE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MARKET

Publishers could miss out on a substantial market for literature among minority ethnic communities if they fail to employ staff who have an inside knowledge of those markets. According to the 2003 Arts Council England and Office of National Statistics report *Focus on Cultural Diversity*, minority ethnic communities are heavily involved in literary pursuits from reading to creative writing. The under-representation of these groups in the industry is made more apparent when compared to their interest in literature and the arts.

The proportion of Black people reading for pleasure is, according to the data, 72%. The proportion among the Asian population is 61%. Minority ethnic groups are well above average in their involvement in creative writing, a fact that is not reflected by publishers' white lists. About 7% of Black and 10% of mixed ethnicity people had written stories or plays in the past year, compared to the national figure of 4%. Minority ethnic users also beat the overall national figure for public library use.

According to the survey, 47% of all people had visited a public library in the past year, but among Asian, Black, Chinese and other ethnic groups the number of library users was higher than the national figure by as much as 10%. The opportunities presented to the publishing industry by minority ethnic communities is not lost on respondents to the decibel survey. But many feel that the industry will struggle to take advantage of these opportunities if it does not employ a more diverse workforce.

The survey drew responses from a wide cross-section of roles. Editorial is best represented with 29% of respondents, with 11% and 12% from sales and marketing respectively. About 26% of respondents are managing directors, chief executives, or a partner in or director of their company. Women account for 69% of responses.

Opinions about diversity vary slightly according to department and seniority. Of the managing directors and chief executives who responded, 28% regard their company as culturally diverse, but 30% admit it is not. About 33% think their company has moderate cultural diversity. At officer or executive level, the respective figures are 18% and 28%. Those at the top of companies are often accused of being complacent about cultural diversity, but the survey uncovered a general consensus that under-representation of minority ethnic groups should be addressed.

Wider range

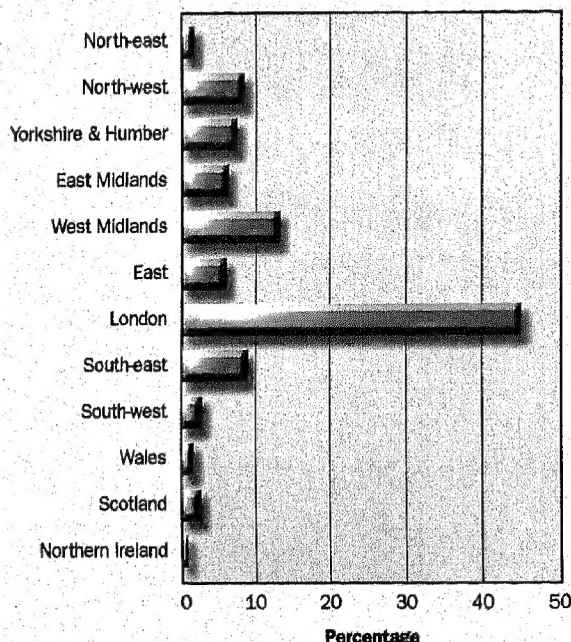
As well as working in a range of departments, respondents from minority ethnic communities work across a range of organisational sizes. Only 4% are self-employed or freelance, while 27% are in companies with more than 500 employees. The circulation of the survey by human resources departments in conglomerate publishers may have weighted these results in favour of large organisations.

The data suggests that new entrants to the industry are being drawn from a wider range of communities. The vast majority of minority ethnic respondents—84%—are below the age of 40,

“It's who you know; it's a clique... cultural diversity happens at the fringes of the industry, not at its heart”

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

45% of Black and Asian people living in London



Regional distribution of the Black and Asian population, April 2001

Sources: Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics; Census, April 2001, General Register Office for Scotland; Census, April 2001, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

Population size

7.9% FROM A MINORITY ETHNIC GROUP

	Total population		% of minority ethnic population	
	Count	%		
White	54,153,898	92.1	n/a	
Mixed	677,117	1.2	14.6	
Asian or Asian British				
Indian	1,053,411	1.8	22.7	
Pakistan	747,285	1.3	16.1	
Bangladeshi	283,063	0.5	6.1	
Other Asian	247,664	0.4	5.3	
Black or Black British				
Black Caribbean	565,876	1.0	12.2	
Black African	485,277	0.8	10.5	
Black Other	97,585	0.2	2.1	
Chinese				
	247,403	0.4	5.3	
Other				
	230,615	0.4	5.1	
All minority ethnic population	4,635,296	7.9	100	
All population	58,789,194	100	n/a	

The UK population: by ethnic group, April 2001

compared to 67% of white respondents. Only 22% of those from minority ethnic groups have worked in publishing for more than 10 years, compared to 40% of those from white groups. This suggests that, in the long term, minority ethnic employees will make an impact in the boardroom, though it is difficult to predict from the data which departments will have representative numbers of Black and Asian management first. Whether there is a glass ceiling that will continue to keep publishers' boardrooms a largely white, male, middle-class preserve remains to be seen.

Certainly there is a degree of pessimism among respondents. One suggested that "there is some diversity in sales, marketing and administration at lower ranks, decreasing dramatically higher up. There is virtually zero diversity in editorial."

The barriers to management diversity are as much economic as cultural, according to many respondents. "As wages remain static at middle-ranking levels and lists are cut, the industry is going to remain overwhelmingly white and upper-middle class," was typical of the comments from many respondents.

More diverse lists

One area where cultural diversity has made an impact on the industry is on publishers' lists. Nearly two-thirds of respondents agree that there is now more diversity on lists, with only 22% claiming that lists are less diverse or have remained the same. Asian novelists in particular have a higher profile and are more visible, though their higher profile presence has been from a low base.

A glance at the UK bestseller lists reveals how much work remains to be done. Authors such as Zadie Smith and Monica Ali may have broken into the charts in the past few years, but the top end of the market remains heavily dominated by white UK and US authors. Of the top 100 selling books of 2003 according to Nielsen BookScan, none are by Black or Asian authors. Monica Ali's Booker-shortlisted *Brick Lane* reached only 179 on the annual list.

But the number of Black and Asian authors backed by substantial marketing support in large houses fails to reflect the high level of literary activity in minority ethnic communities, as other surveys reveal (see box: a missed opportunity). Reading is a fundamental part of Black and Asian community life, and library usage is also higher than average in these communities. This is clearly not reflected in most lists, and implies that the industry is missing out on important market opportunities.

Direct action

There is a sense that the under-representation of minority ethnic communities, both by and within the industry, is self-perpetuating and needs direct action by management if it is to change. Publishing employs an overwhelmingly white and middle-class workforce. It is also less proactive than other, more diverse sectors in branding itself as a profession and in recruitment. Networks, personal and professional, tend to be dominated by white, middle-class graduates. As a result, those who hear about publishing through social networks and family connections form a large proportion of respondents: 40% got their first job in the business through either a contact, a referral or network of some kind.

Publishing will remain a closed shop as long as these networks are dominated by white, middle-class, Oxbridge graduates and their friends, as more than one survey respondent notes: "It's who you know; it's a clique... cultural diversity happens at the fringes of the industry, not at its heart." Another observes: "Like other relatively small industries many jobs are filled by word of mouth, so by default limiting the range of people who apply."

But the survey offers room for optimism that the industry is becoming more diverse. That the issue needs to be addressed seriously is acknowledged by many, giving hope that publishing will be better placed in the future to reap the benefits offered by a culturally diverse workforce. As one notes: "Publishers need to diversify if they are going to survive... At the moment everyone is too similar."

Diversity pays dividends

That diversity is no longer a marginal issue for businesses is apparent when Digby Jones, CBI director-general, says: "Business needs to show through its actions how to weed out discrimination and make an example of people who are discriminating... to show publicly that this will not be tolerated."

Greater emphasis than before is being placed on encouraging cultural diversity as desirable in its own right. Race for Opportunity, a national network of over 180 UK organisations working on race and diversity as a business agenda, is growing in membership. W H Smith, the BBC, the Guardian Media Group and Pearson are among its members.

Jo Lakin, WHS employee relations manager, recognises the importance of a diverse workforce. "We believe that employing staff who are familiar with the different cultures of our customer base is a huge benefit to our customers and ourselves, as we are able to gain a better understanding of our customers and their needs," she explains.

Being competitive

The Top 100 Report launched in July 2003 by Race for Opportunity chairman Allan Leighton revealed that more organisations than ever see a clear business case for putting diversity on the boardroom agenda. "Diversity is not about equal opportunities or compliance, it's about being more competitive, especially in a downturn," he says. "Over 100 private and public sector participants tell us they invest in challenging ignorance and apathy because they've taken a closer look at their marketplace. Quite simply, communities equal customers and potential employees. If you rely on traditional perceptions of who these groups are, you limit your pool of talent and your target market."

Statistics on diversity in the media are thin on the ground. Beulah Ainley, author of *Black Journalists, White Media* found that in the mid to late-1990s, of 3,000 journalists working on national newspapers, only 20 were Black. In 1998, the NUJ estimated that only 1.8% of its 27,000-strong membership was Black, compared to 5.27% of the national population.

In May 2001 the editorial department at the *Guardian* set up a diversity working party, looking into all areas, including disability, age and race. It discovered that the editorial department in Guardian Newspapers Ltd (part of GMG) was 93% white. Better than the industry average of 96%, but not, as equality and diversity project manager Emma Kiwanuka points out, very impressive.

In 2002 an equality and diversity steering committee was set up, chaired by a diversity board champion. The committee set out seven strategic aims including recruitment and retention, dignity at work, monitoring and communication. Diversity action plans were adopted for each department. In advertising, for example, one action point was to recruit outside normal channels. The finance department requests recruitment agencies reflect the breakdown of the local minority ethnic population in shortlists of candidates.

In spring 2003 there was a review of recruitment practices. All managers now attend courses about legislation and fair interviewing techniques. The language of advertisements and job specifications has been scrutinised in the interests of reaching the widest possible market. Feedback from staff has been enthusiastic.

"It's raised awareness across the organisation—we hold diversity awareness workshops, and more suggestions arise from those," Kiwanuka says. "An employee opinion survey in 2003 shows that it has ignited their imagination. Apart from the moral argument, there's the talent argument—we have to be looking

Progressive companies are placing cultural diversity at the top of their agenda. Hilary Macaskill reveals why

for the best people, and we should be reflecting the audience in a cosmopolitan area."

In 1999 the BBC merged two equality units to form the Diversity Centre. Cyril Husbands, a senior diversity manager, joined the centre three years ago. He says: "The equality agenda, important though it is, is not the whole agenda. It's not just about numbers and representation, it's about inclusiveness and meaningful diversity."

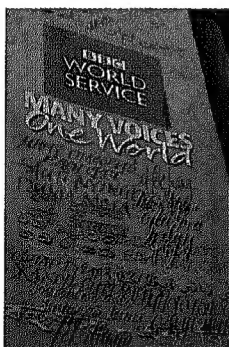
Targets and training

Training courses for those interviewing and recruiting, and senior executives becoming champions in different areas are among measures adopted. The BBC set—and reached—a target for minority ethnic employees of 10% by the end of 2003. The target has now been revised up to 12.5% of all grades, with 7% for senior managers, up from 4%. "As part of reviewing targets and preparation for charter review in 2006, we compared ourselves with the benchmarking survey conducted by Race for Opportunity and we were exceeding the standards set by the other 109 organisations who took part last time," Husbands says.

He acknowledges that targets alone are not enough. "There had been some controversy about whether targets are demanding enough, or whether they were needed at all. But it's important to remember these are targets, not quotas. They are objectives. Corporate targets are only a crude general indicator—departmental and qualitative targets are as important as corporate targets."

Husbands observes that the BBC is "is very different from when I entered it. There is far less cynicism, far more collaboration and communication. One thing that made a difference was Greg Dyke's corporate culture change—Making It Happen [a BBC-wide project of change, based around seven fundamental ideas]. There were many cynics, and some sceptics—I would classify myself as a hopeful sceptic. But an employees' survey showed that 60% believe that Making It Happen has improved their experience of working in the BBC. It was a radical transformation."

There is, as Husbands says, always room for improvement. "I think of diversity as a journey rather than a destination, and it's not even in a straight line. But there is now a universal understanding: blue-chip companies that the more diverse their workforce is, the more profitable the company is because they are more creative and happier. Businesses that are more diverse do better."



first person: Karen

IS BLACK AND A DIRECTOR AT A LARGE PUBLISHING HOUSE

"I didn't go to university but began in administration within publishing and was encouraged by my boss to go to evening classes to study. I went to the London College of Printing for a year. I am now at director level but it took 12 years to get here. I saw the book trade as small but prestigious. I remember feeling lucky to land my second job after only a short while because there weren't enough jobs for the people who wanted to get in.

Twenty-five years ago young people didn't talk about publishing as a career opportunity. Now, some schools are doing a lot to promote it because more students are applying for work experience and I take at least one student per year. I've been doing this for the past four years and I have never had an application from a minority ethnic student. There should be more done to encourage minority ethnic groups. Personally, I think the encouragement should start with schools, universities and careers officers.

I have never come across any Black or Asian people who have experienced difficulties getting into publishing, so it is hard to comment. What I do know is that for a long time I thought I was the only Black person in publishing. However, for the past five years, I've started to see a small trickle of Black and Asian workers in the industry."

The name of the interviewee has been changed. Interview: Aislinn McCormick

Time for change

Minority ethnic communities may be better represented on the bookshelves, but they are pitifully under-represented in UK publishing houses. Danuta Kean investigates why, and looks at ways to make the industry more culturally diverse

Publishing is, to coin a phrase, hideously white. That is the harsh conclusion of the first industry-wide survey into cultural diversity. It is also the opinion of the vast majority of respondents to the decibel survey. "A sea of white faces prevails, with occasional Asian ones and rare Black ones," writes one. "Book publishing is probably the least culturally diverse sector of the leisure/entertainment industry," writes another.

But if publishers are angst-ridden about the lack of diversity, why does the business remain so white? Why are minority ethnic communities under-represented in the workforce? Could UK publishing be institutionally racist?

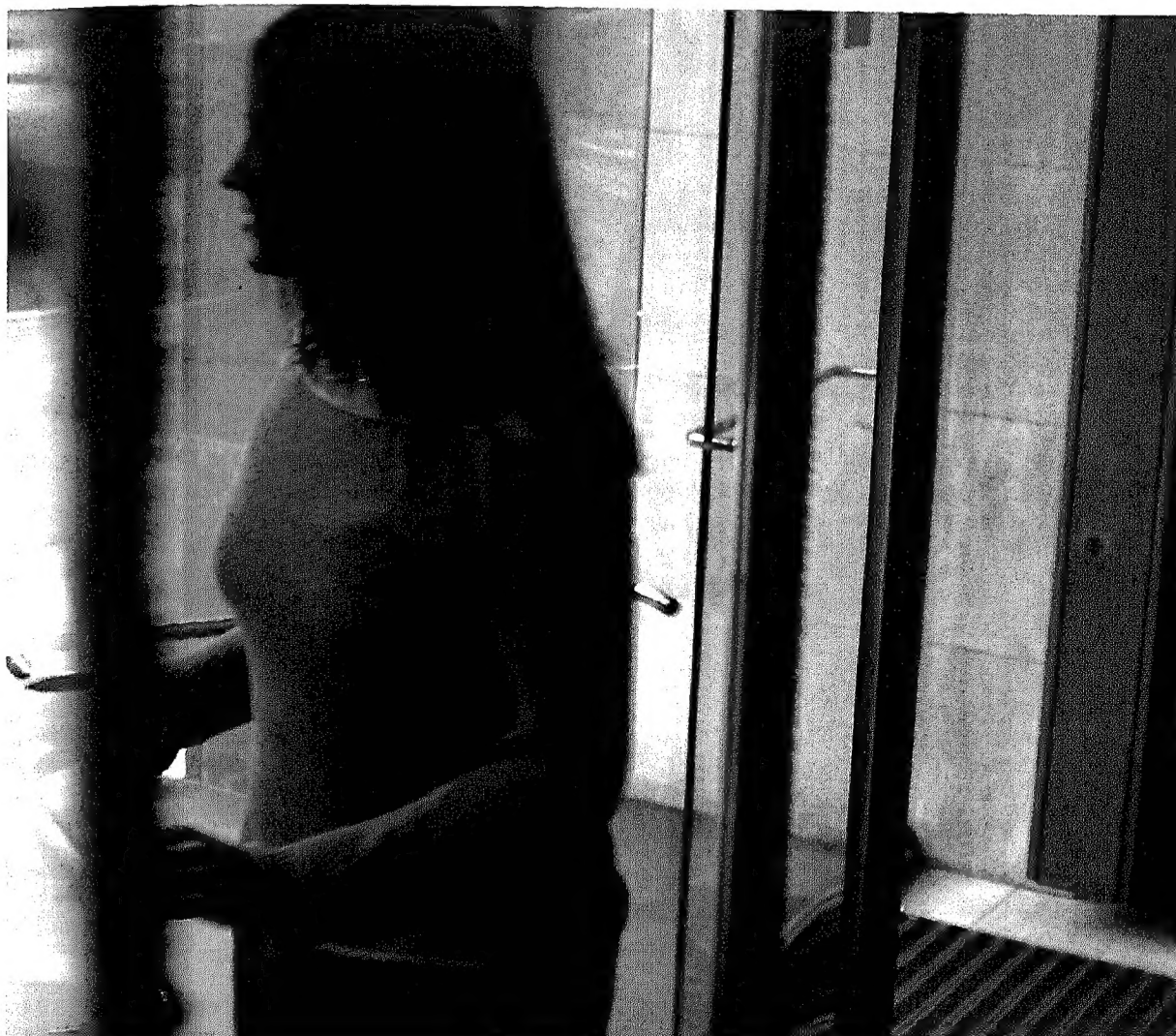
"Racism" is an emotive word, which conjures up violent images of abuse. But it manifests itself in more subtle ways than the boot in the face or the verbal assault. It is present in the unthinking sins of omission as well as commission. It infects the seemingly innocuous, such as asking your only Black editor to pitch for a book by a Black author, even though the editor will not work on the book; or inviting an Indian accounts executive to boardroom drinks only when an Indian publisher visits town; or responding defensively when Black or Asian colleagues raise the subject of ethnic diversity.

It is present in generalisations about minority ethnic communities. "There are some innate barriers to full cultural diversity in publishing, as we rely heavily on good language and literary skills within our chosen fields," wrote one editorial director in response to the decibel survey. "Not all ethnic and cultural groups can offer these skills." It is doubtful he would regard his remarks as racist, but they are.

Subtle racism

Open racism is rare in publishing. Few Black and Asian publishers regard the business as racist. But many feel that prevailing attitudes, while not intentionally racist, compound a sense of being in a minority. Ellah Allfrey, editor at Random House, says: "The one thing that I have experienced, which is hard to categorise, is people being surprised at my race when they meet me. They don't say anything, they just have this look of surprise which they don't know how to mask." It is a familiar picture says Elise Dillsworth, an editor at Virago. "It is very subtle. People have looked surprised when they meet me because I'm Black."

More pernicious, according to Andrea Henry, who worked in publishing before moving to the *Daily Mirror* as books editor, is the way employers use minority ethnic employees to present a



“ Denial is about destroying colour. Being colour blind isn't about tolerance. Tolerance is about allowing people to be different and acknowledging that we all have different stories ”

Ravi Mirchandani

how to get a job in publishing

WE HEAR FROM TWO DIFFERENT PEOPLE ABOUT THEIR ROUTE INTO PUBLISHING

Priya Dutta works for Pearson Education as a graduate trainee

"I grew up in Wood Green in north London but went to a private school in Elstree. I studied English at Oxford, but it wasn't until my second year at university that I fixed on publishing as the career for me. I went to the careers service to investigate what careers I could go into after university and I found out about publishing there. I did lots of research and applied for work experience in the summer. I did a few months at Macmillan, which I arranged by contacting a former Oxford graduate who worked there. The careers service had given me a list of alumni who were working in publishing and willing to be contacted by undergraduates. Finding work experience was actually really easy. I'm not sure what it's like for other people but that extensive list of contacts from the careers service made it fairly easy for me.

When it came to job hunting I went to the careers service again because they have a lot of information about how to apply for jobs and what's available. Initially I applied just for the Macmillan graduate training scheme but was rejected from that so I worked in a bookshop for six months and then re-applied for Macmillan and also Pearson Education and Penguin.

I didn't get an interview for Macmillan but I was proceeding with the Pearson scheme. The Pearson scheme was quite an arduous process involving a preliminary interview, a day-long assessment and a final interview so it was a mixture of interviews and practical skills. I was offered the only place. I'm not really sure about the numbers of people who applied but I think it was 800."

Cathy Atkinson works at Boardworks as an editor

"I went to a normal comprehensive school in Farnham in Surrey and did a degree in English at Leeds University. I thought initially about going straight into publishing but wrote to companies asking for work experience and didn't really get anywhere. I heard about the courses through my careers service and that seemed like a sensible route. I picked the MA at Oxford Brookes and while I was doing the course I did work experience. Being able to say that I was on the course made it a lot easier than my previous attempts to find work experience.

Before the course started, I spent a month at Quarto children's books. And then, while I was studying, I spent one day a week working at OUP and two days a week at Harcourt Education. I got the work at Quarto by writing to them and the OUP position through the course. Oxford Brookes has a jobs database and links with local companies.

Everyone I knew did some sort of work experience, if they wanted to. I got the Harcourt job through someone I knew at the Society of Young Publishers. I asked her if there were placements available and she employed me for one day a week. While I was working part-time at Harcourt they were advertising vacancies. I applied for a post there as an electronic editorial assistant, which was the area I was doing work experience in, and I got offered that job, which began a couple of months before I finished my work experience so I didn't have to job hunt much. I think I was really lucky because I had written to Harcourt the year previously asking for work experience and I didn't hear anything. It was only when I had somebody's name that I really did it."

more diverse image. "I have been wheeled out when publishers wanted to acquire a Black book." She recalls being summoned by two different employers into pitches for projects by Black authors, one of which she would have had no other involvement in. "I think they were quite glad to field a Black member of staff."

Though rare, explicit racism is not unknown. "I went for a job at a small company," says Black publishing executive Lucy (not her real name). "When I got there, one of the two interviewers refused to shake my hand. He then refused to look at me, instead he gazed at the ceiling throughout the interview."

Sales and marketing executive Syphia (not her real name) suffered serious harassment when she started in publishing. "A director made my life hell," she recalls. The man bombarded her with racist comments, jokes and questions, forcing his attentions on her in a clear abuse of his position and power. Though management acknowledged the situation it took two years for them to act. "Why did I put up with it for so long? I thought that maybe that was the way it was in publishing," she recalls bitterly.

Twenty years on, things are better, she concedes, but racism still exists. "A big thing is white, middle-class men who see Black and Asian women as some kind of sexual fantasy," she says. It happens out of hours, she says, when emboldened by a few drinks white, male colleagues sidle up and say they find "exotic women very sexy". It is a line familiar to British Asian Sue Amaradivakara, senior account manager at Colman Getty. "Yeah, I have had the 'exotic' thing said to me occasionally," she says.

But Amaradivakara's worst experience concerned two authors, husband and wife, when she worked inhouse. They told her in no uncertain terms to anglicise her surname as "it was silly having such a long surname in this country".

She adds: "There was one other Asian girl who worked in design and people used to call us by the same name all the time, as if we were indistinguishable, though we looked completely different. We were just the same height and colour."

A potential minefield

Victims of racial harassment rarely report it. There is a strong sense among minority ethnic publishers that to say anything will harm their career prospects. Even raising the subject of diversity can be a minefield, observes Ravi Mirchandani, editorial director at Wm Heinemann.

He recalls a conversation with white publishing friends about why he liked working with an Asian colleague. "There are things only we have in common," he told them. What he regarded as a harmless observation spiralled into an argument, as his friends became defensive refusing to acknowledge that his ethnicity might make him different to them. This refusal to acknowledge



“It is clearly desirable to have one's spread of staff as representative of the population as possible, but we aren't always able to do that”

David Young

cultural differences outrages Mirchandani: "Just let me be different. Everyone around can be as liberal as hell, but that does not mean that sometimes it would be nice to have a couple of other people around who are like me." He adds: "Denial is about destroying colour. Being colour blind isn't about tolerance. Tolerance is about allowing people to be different and acknowledging that we all have different stories."

So-called liberals

"One of the difficulties we have is with so-called liberals who absolutely refuse to acknowledge that the effects of what they do is racist," says Vastiana Belfon, founder of the independent Black women's erotica list Brown Skin Books. The denial of cultural difference can create taboos around the subject of diversity. As one African Caribbean publisher observes: "Diversity is a very awkward subject to raise. There is no one here that I would talk to about it because they don't want to think about it. It is like being a whistle blower in the government. You know you should say something, because it is the right thing to do, but you don't."

How can publishers ensure Black and Asian colleagues are free to speak out? Open communication helps. Better still, says one Black director, they can lead by example. "I asked a close colleague of my former chief executive why the company didn't have a bigger Black workforce, and he said, 'I don't think that is important'. What is shocking about managing directors who have that mentality is that, if they are at the helm, their attitude has an effect on the rest of the staff. If they don't think it is a priority, then there is no incentive for managers to make it a priority."

For most minority ethnic publishers the hardest thing to bear is being the only one, however understanding white colleagues may be. Elise Dillsworth describes it as the Desert Island syndrome. "When I see another Black person at a party, I have such a feeling of excitement that I want to run up to them and say: I thought I was alone."

Being a pioneer is tough, and the lack of senior role models is dispiriting. "I have worked with really wonderful people," says one, "but when I look above me, I don't see my face reflected back. Hopefully if a young Black girl started out now she would feel better." It also creates pressure of another kind. Many feel they are in a goldfish bowl, the token minority ethnic member of staff in a senior position. If they get it wrong they will bar the way for any other Black or Asian colleague. Says one senior minority ethnic publisher: "For much of the past 20 years Monica Green, production director at HarperCollins, has been the only Black person in a senior position. It seems as if they only have room for one Black person and it's Monica."

The only way to challenge this belief is to increase cultural diversity in senior management. But how? Natural wastage is a slow process. Besides, as writer, publisher and critic Margaret Busby observes, unlike the fight for women to achieve status in the profession, the battle for cultural diversity has produced few results in the past 30 years. "In terms of racial diversity publishing has not changed much since I came into the business. I can still go to things where I am the only Black person in the room," comments the founder of Allison & Busby.

The quota argument

The alternative to evolution is revolution, and in particular quotas. These bring numerous complications, one of the most serious being that they leave beneficiaries vulnerable to accusations that their appointment is due to policy not ability. Quotas would also meet fierce resistance at executive level. Merely mentioning cultural diversity to some chief executives draws a sharp response that "quotas are a bad idea", whether quotas are mentioned or not.

What will make a difference is when senior management feels that the lack of cultural diversity in publishing threatens profit-

first person: Ravi Mirchandani

IS OF MIXED RACE AND IS PUBLISHING DIRECTOR FOR WM HEINEMANN

"I began a publishing career as a trainee graduate at Macmillan after graduating from King's College, Cambridge. I stayed at Macmillan for two-and-a-half years, nine at Penguin, two at Weidenfeld within Orion, and the past six years at Wm Heinemann/Random House.

The university careers service had details on file of graduate trainee programmes at CUP and Macmillan and they were among the half-dozen jobs I applied for at that time. So there was nothing in the way of encouragement from the university itself, but the information was available to me. I didn't experience any barriers because of my race. I got turned down by the BBC and CUP, but such graduate jobs are pretty competitive, so I wouldn't really refer to this in terms of 'difficulties'.

I wouldn't go as far as saying that publishing is closed to particular groups, but like many small worlds, it tends to favour people who are similar to the people who are already there. I think this shows itself far more in terms of class and educational background, a bias towards Oxbridge, than in race terms. But one does tend to have the effect of leading to the other.

I hope publishing will become accessible to ethnic groups in time, but I'm not sure about ways of shortcutting the process. The old Arts Council ethnic minority trainee scheme was rather a good idea as it presented publishing as an option to more potential candidates from ethnic groups."

Interview: Aislinn McCormick

ability. In an industry where profits are squeezed on all sides, diversity is low on the list of priorities. But this may be short-term thinking, as research by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising reveals (see The Brown Pound box).

Orion chief executive Peter Roche admits that diversity has not been at the top of the company's agenda. "It isn't something that hits our radar at the moment." Ethnic minorities make up between five and 10% of Orion's workforce, at Roche's own estimate, though he would like to see that figure grow. Time Warner c.e.o. David Young makes a similar admission.

Young is investigating what Time Warner Books can do to attract a more culturally diverse range of people to the company. But, he says, many publishers are unable to implement extensive programmes, such as joining the university milk round, because of the costs involved. "It is clearly desirable to have one's spread of staff as representative of the population as possible, but we aren't always able to do that," he says.

The main obstacle cited by senior management against actively promoting diversity is resources. It is notable that the two publishers conducting the most extensive review of their diversity policies are among the biggest in the UK: Random House and Penguin. Penguin leads the way with a project allied to a scheme run throughout parent company Pearson. As David Young observes, for managing directors of small to medium size enterprises with between 90 and 200 staff, the resources needed to fund such projects are simply not available.

Under-resourcing militates against proactive recruitment. Work experience candidates are chosen from the myriad applicants who write off on spec. Work experience completed, they go to the front of the queue when vacancies arise. But a system that relies on candidates' own awareness of publishing as a profession, and their willingness to work unpaid, discriminates against those without either connections or money. It is self-perpetuating because it discriminates in favour of middle-class graduates with connections, the vast majority of whom are white.

The root of the problem

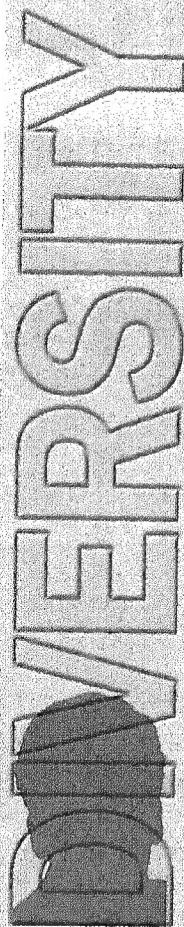
For many, outdated recruitment policies are at the root of the lack of diversity, economic and cultural, in publishing. It is as much a class, as a race issue. "I don't have any first-hand experience of cultural diversity in my company, since I work in a white, middle-class ghetto," was the typical opinion of one respondent to the decibel survey.

It is a subject close to the heart of Alison Morrison, head of marketing and associate director at Walker Books, who is adamant she would not have entered the industry without help from an Arts Council traineeship aimed at promoting cultural diversity. Morrison is not a typical publishing type. Of mixed race, she went to a Portsmouth comprehensive school before reading African and Caribbean Studies at Kent University. Morrison answered an advertisement in the *Guardian* for one of two places on the scheme. The course involved two paid six-month placements at Jonathan Cape and Virago, as well as courses on time management and finance. "If it were not for that traineeship, I would not be in publishing," Morrison says starkly. Not only did the scheme introduce her to a career she has excelled at, it enabled her to get her foot in the door when she could not afford to do unpaid work experience. "When I started work at 16 I had to work for money. I couldn't work for free, I couldn't afford to do that."

Like many minority ethnic people working in the business, Morrison believes the best way to increase diversity will be for publishers to start talking to careers departments in schools and universities outside the Oxbridge sphere of influence. It is a point not lost on Penguin, and is at the heart of the company's groundbreaking diversity project.

The project is coordinated across Pearson by diversity manager Raphael Mokades. Schools and universities with a high percentage of minority ethnic students have been targeted

the brown pound



Businesses that fail to employ a culturally diverse workforce risk missing out on minority ethnic communities' combined disposable wealth of £32bn, according to an advertising industry report. The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising report, *Ethnic Diversity in the UK*, identified the "brown pound" as a growing economic force in the UK.

According to 2001 census data four million people, or 7.9%, of the UK population belongs to a minority ethnic community. In London the percentage of the population belonging to a minority ethnic community is 29%. In contrast, census data recorded a drop in the overall white population.

Anilna Raheja, m.d. of Media Moguls, writes in the introduction to the IPA report: "In the same way that there is a pink pound and a grey pound, there is without doubt a brown pound."

Underlining the spending power of minority ethnic communities, the IPA report reveals:

- 74% of South Asians have a mobile phone compared to 69% of the total UK population
- 70% own a personal computer, as against 50% of the UK population
- 57% have access to the internet at home, as opposed to 47% of the UK adult population
- Black Caribbean women are seen as more successful and have higher rates of self-employment than many other minority ethnic communities
- There is an emerging Black Caribbean middle class that has a strong community network, strong religious principles and is committed to improving education, employment and achievement within their community.

The advertising industry has responded to the figures by trebling the number of campaigns featuring minority ethnic actors. It is also seeking to increase the percentage of minority ethnic professionals working in the industry. At present only 4% of advertising staff come from a minority ethnic background, and 70% of those are in support roles such as IT.



“A workforce that mirrors the population, especially urban populations where the majority of books are sold, will be able to tap into the whole market”

Helen Fraser

by open days and for work experience. The company has also actively encouraged minority ethnic applicants for its graduate trainee scheme. Last year half the applicants were Black or Asian and one of the two placements went to a minority ethnic applicant.

Penguin has also instructed recruitment agencies to increase the number of minority ethnic candidates fielded for vacancies. In addition, focus groups of staff have been run to find out exactly what people feel about equal opportunities at the company. This will form the basis of its internal diversity policy aimed at dealing with cultural awareness.

Business benefits

It is the way forward if the industry is to become more diverse and better represent the population it serves: minority ethnic communities account for 7.9% of the population of England and Wales and 29% of the population of London. "There are undoubted benefits to a business," Penguin group m.d. Helen Fraser explains. "A workforce that mirrors the population, especially urban populations where the majority of books are sold, will be able to tap into the whole market," she explains.

Is there room to be optimistic? Certainly, says Fraser, one of the women who broke through the glass ceiling to top management. And the trade will be the better for it, she adds: "When I got into publishing 32 years ago it was not diverse, but in a different way. Then it was full of middle-aged, white males. It has changed and become more gender diverse, and most people think that has been good for the industry. In a way this is the next piece of work we have to do to make ourselves more responsive to the market."

Charles Nicely-Connected, m.d. of Markett-Fodder, reveals to Terence Blacker the secrets of his climb to the summit of publishing

One of the best pieces of advice I have ever been given was by the managing director of a publishing house where I happened to be working at my first job in the post-room. On Fridays, knowing that my salary only stretched to meagre "sarnies", he would take me down the road for a little treat. "The most important thing to remember about British publishing is that there are no free lunches," he told me over lunch at the Caprice. "It's a glorious meritocracy and you have to make your own way in it." As with so much that my father said, they were profoundly wise words.

Since then, I'm proud to say that I've worked my way up from the bottom in this great industry of ours. Having come down from Exeter with a degree in Business Studies, people expected me to follow my friends into the City but I have always had a love of books and, even when I was still at public school, I would accompany my father to Hatchards' famous Author of the Year parties where I would meet famous writers, publishers and agents.

When Dad mentioned that there might be an opening at his firm, I jumped at the chance in spite of a salary so low that I had to walk to work from my flat in Knightsbridge! It was a useful three months but, after a small fire broke out in the post-room during my ciggie break, my father suggested that I might move to a job where, as he jokingly put it, "I couldn't do any harm".

Within the month, I was an editor! The now-defunct house of Godwit & Stone had launched a new imprint and my godfather Sir Humphrey Godwit put in a good word for me. After a surprisingly brief interview, my career was launched.

What is it that makes a good editor? The answer lies in a single word: contacts. At my new job, I hit the ground running and mastered the fine art of creative lunching, discovering, to my great surprise, that many of my contemporaries from school and university had also ended up in the media.

It has been said that I would never have landed the thriller writer Tim Garson (now Lord Garson) if he had not been married to my sister. To which I say: precisely. The good publisher is one who keeps his wits about him and uses a sort of literary sixth sense to get those big books.

Soon after I joined them, Godwit & Stone were taken over by an American conglomerate but there I learnt another important lesson: in publishing, you have to make your own luck.

My luck came in the shape of my new wife Annabel, who hap-

breaking the mould

DANUTA KEAN ON HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN EXPAND ITS POOL OF POTENTIAL LABOUR

Charles Nicely-Connected is a gross parody of how contacts help publishers reach the top. But there is a strong sense among many in the industry that self-perpetuating networks have more influence on career success than talent.

The white middle classes dominate these networks, a point made by Alison Morrison, head of marketing and associate director at Walker Books. Morrison, who is of mixed race, went to a Portsmouth comprehensive and Kent at Canterbury University before she entered publishing through an Arts Council traineeship aimed at minority ethnic communities. Along with many other minority ethnic publishers, she believes that one way for the industry to become more diverse is by targeting career services in state schools and non-Oxbridge universities.

One South Asian publisher says: "At my university there were a huge number of minority ethnic students, over 50%. Publishing was not on the radar as a career, though all the retailers and corporations such as Microsoft were actively trying to recruit." She believes the industry needs to brand itself in the state education sector if it is to become more culturally diverse.

That'll do nicely

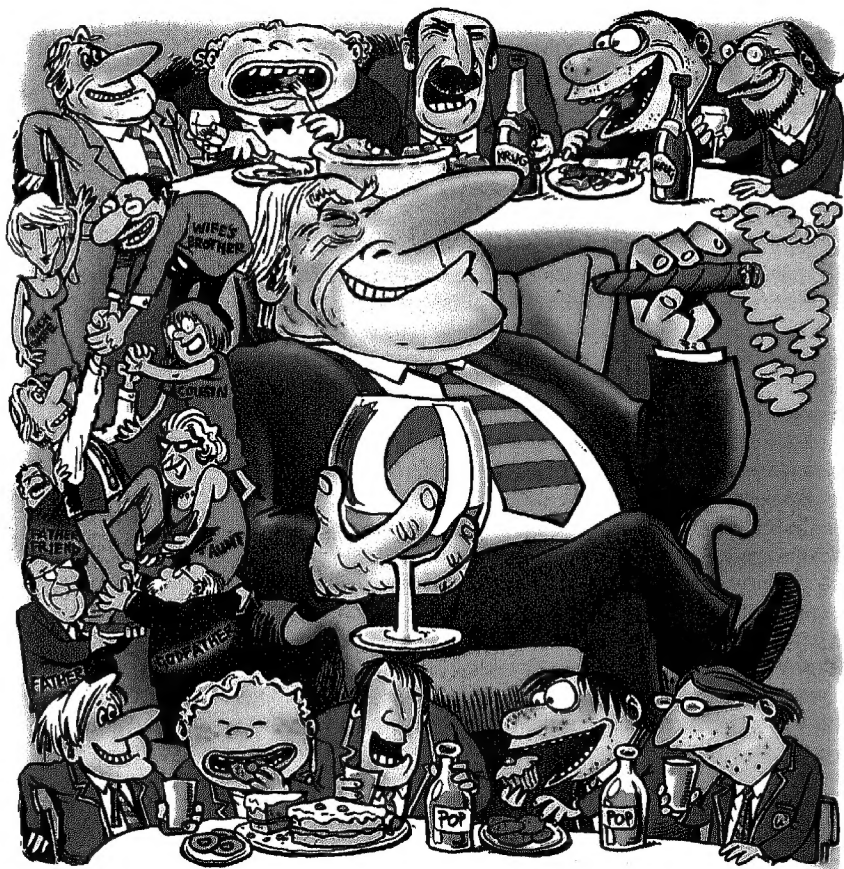


ILLUSTRATION- HUNT EMERSON

pened to belong to the famous Markett-Fodder family. Soon I was on the board of the family firm and since then I have been lucky enough to add a few more directorships and consultancies to my name.

What have I learnt on my way to the top? First of all, British publishing is no longer a profession for gentlemen. There are some pretty feisty ladies up there too! Yes, it may be run by people who happen to have similar interests and backgrounds but then it is precisely because we talk the same language and are quite often personal friends that the whole thing works so well.

Class snobbery has no place in our business. At Market-Fodder, we go out of our way to employ people from all backgrounds. Go into sales, production and even contracts and you will hear a mix of accents. One day I hope that editorial, publicity and senior management will also be part of the melting-pot but these things take time. At the moment, one simply can't have an editor at a smart launch party, wandering about saying "Wotcha, Salman, gotta new novel on the bubble, then, eh, squire?"

That's not prejudice; it's sound business sense.

Maybe I'm too liberal for my own good but frankly it gives me tremendous pleasure that a whole corner of our list is devoted to authors of different backgrounds to my own. At Markett-Fodder, inclusiveness is the name of the game in 2004.

On the personal front, I look forward to a bright future in the business and even harbour the secret hope that my boys, Hamish and Jamie, might one day carry on the good work. In fact, already I'm taking them to the Hatchards Author of the Year party to show them exactly how the ever-changing world of modern publishing works.

Are you simpatico?

In 14 years I have never had a Black editor," says bestselling children's author Malorie Blackman. "I walk into my agent or publisher and I don't see Black and Asian people there," observes Hari Kunzru, award-winning author of *The Impressionist*. "It is odd, I must admit, when I go to something like the Nibbies to find a complete lack of Black faces. It is a very, very white industry," says Mike Gayle, bestselling author.

When Black and Asian writers make contact with the publishing industry they are encountering an environment where they will be edited, marketed, sold and publicised almost exclusively by white publishing staff. There is a sense among authors that this mismatch affects the publishing process and their own careers.

Persistent question

A persistent question is how receptive publishers are to Black and Asian authors, and to the full range of their writing. Certainly, in the early 1990s there were many doors to be opened and prejudices to overcome. Malorie Blackman said no publisher would take more than one book at a time from her in the early days of her career, because there was uncertainty about how well they would sell. In one incident she was asked by a publisher to change the identity of the family in a story she had written from Black to Asian, because the publisher already had one book about a Black family on its lists.

Andrea Levy, who has published her four novels with Headline, remembers "one-and-a-half years of rejection" before her debut was accepted. "Because most of what was being published then by Black writers was guns and Yardie stuff, publishers didn't know what to do with a family story," she says. "There was a fear that there was no universality in the story, that only Black people would buy it and there were not enough of them."

Much has changed in the past decade, most obviously when the big commercial and critical successes—Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*—created new templates in publishers' eternal search for bestsellers.

Yet publishing may still not offer a level playing field. Black writers need to be better than their white counterparts to be accepted for publication, believes Levy: "I know a lot of books are less than good—white writers are allowed to be that, but Black writers aren't."

There is also a widespread belief that publishers are happier with novels that deal with issues of race, effectively ghettoising writers. "If you do go to a publisher with a book about a subject other than a multicultural society, you're going to have a hard time," Levy argues.

Hari Kunzru makes the same point: "Will people accept it if Monica Ali chooses to set her next book in Hampstead, with no Black characters?"

Nineteen agents rejected Luke Sutherland before his debut *Jelly Roll* was published by Transworld. It went on to be short-listed for the Whitbread First Novel award. He conjectures that it was not obvious how to place a novel that did not play to preconceived ideas of Black literature (*Jelly Roll* is written in the Scottish vernacular). "But reviewers' responses were mostly free of pigeonholing," he says.

Bernardine Evaristo had a positive experience when her novel-in-verse, *The Emperor's Babe*, was published by Hamish Hamilton three years ago: "I really don't think that this risky book, which is radically outside the box in terms of expectations of 'Black literature', would have been published in, say, 1989. Our society is more inclusive and more open-minded; so too is the publishing

What is it like to be a Black or Asian author published by a mainly white industry? Benedicte Page investigates



world. My editor actively encouraged me to write the kind of books that I want to write."

She agrees, however, that the jury is out on the wider situation: "Time will tell whether the breakthrough [made by Smith and Ali] is sustainable, or just fashionable, and whether only books that reflect contemporary multi-cultural Britain will be well-published and well-received."

Subtle networks

Kunzru links the issues of race and class when he talks about the subtle social networks that assist an author first in being published, and then in making a success of her or his career. Kunzru was Oxbridge educated, as were Ali and Smith.

"Getting an agent and editor is about your social skills, and because of the enormous predominance of Oxbridge-educated graduates, knowing how to work in a world like that has been invaluable. An example is dealing with the softer end of your relationship with your agent and publisher—meeting them for dinner, going for drinks. It's a world with its own rules, and you have to be able to 'do chat'. If you do, people will find you *simpatico* and do you favours, but if you appear awkward and abrasive, they won't. That's an intimidating situation if you are a young writer."

Among Black writers Mike Gayle stands out by virtue of his huge success in commercial fiction, and his insistence that race has never been an issue in his writing career. His first novel was snapped up swiftly by his agent and sold in a brisk auction. "My assumption was to write and not expect any problem," he says.

His novels do not specify the race of their characters. "Hele Fielding never says that Bridget Jones is white," he says. "Everyone has only to look at the back of the book to see I'm Black and it has made no difference to sales. The only times when race has come up it has invariably been in interviews by liberal newspapers." He accepts, though, that for whatever reason other writers do not feel a similar freedom: "I don't think that the message has got out that if you're a Black author you don't have to write about being Black."

first person: Alison Morrison

IS OF MIXED RACE AND IS HEAD OF MARKETING AND ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR AT WALKER BOOKS

I have been very fortunate in my career and always worked with very good colleagues. People in publishing tend to be quite open-minded and any issues of racism I have encountered are more to do with business decisions about what will and won't sell. I've sat in meetings at adult publishers, when people have said that we can't put a Black face on a cover because it won't sell. I'm not convinced about that. Earlier in my career, I wouldn't have been able to vocalise how I felt. Now, when someone asks my opinion about a book we are publishing I am perfectly happy to put forward my views. I'll say "I think this..." or "I don't like that cover because..."

I think that there is an assumption that books from Black authors don't sell. America is much further ahead than we are in terms of representation of writers from ethnic minorities. It does make you think, don't we have these writers? There is a perceived wisdom that a few 'background characters' from ethnic groups make everything all right—but this is far from the case.

I am interested to see if anything concrete comes of this. I joined publishing over 12 years ago as a direct result of an Arts Council traineeship aimed at encouraging people from ethnic minorities to enter publishing. I think this review is long overdue as I did the traineeship 13 years ago and I have seen little to suggest that the situation has changed drastically since. *Interview by Aislinn McCormick*

first person: Alisha

IS A PAKISTANI HUMAN RESOURCES EXECUTIVE

The name of the interviewee has been changed at her request
Interview: Aislinn McCormick

Good for business

*Hilary
Macaskill
on what the
new Race
Regulations
mean for
businesses*

Employers must ensure that their recruitment procedures are

The CRE is critical of the new regulations, and regards them as confusing and complex. It is campaigning for primary legislation to ensure that all concerned are clear about their duties, to promote racial equality, which, as the DTI points out, is only good for individuals, but good for businesses too.

the race regulations

THE NEW ELEMENTS

- A new definition of indirect discrimination on grounds of race or ethnic or national origin.
- A new, statutory definition of harassment on grounds of race or ethnic or national origin.
- A new exception from the prohibition to discriminate in employment where being of a particular race or of a particular ethnic or national origin is a genuine and determined requirement for the employment in question.
- Continuing protection from discrimination and harassment after a relationship under the Race Relations Act comes to an end; for example, when employment ends.
- A new statutory burden of proof in tribunal or court proceedings concerning discrimination or harassment on grounds of race or ethnic or national origin.

Detailed explanations of the implications of both sets of Regulations can be found on the CRE website (www.cre.gov.uk), and the ACAS website (www.acas.org.uk), also has useful material